

## **LISTING OF THE CLAIMS:**

Claims 1-28, 48, 83, and 159 (withdrawn), and 175 (withdrawn and presently cancelled).

Claims 29-47, 49-82, 84-99, 140-158, and 160-174 (withdrawn).

Claim 100 (Presently amended): A system wherein a user places at least one order for at least one provider and a degree of matching between each order-provider pairing is computed, the system comprising:

a data storage device to receive and store program code and user information, order information, and provider information;

at least one virtual provider that is created by matching provider information of a particular provider with order information of a particular order; and

a knowledge base which is stored in a data storage device which may be said data storage device, ~~which is substantially separate from the user information, the order information, and the provider information, which contains facts and rules for problem solving including facts and rules for constructing requests for information by the system, and~~ which is substantially separate from program code that references said knowledge base either directly or indirectly, which contains facts and rules for iteratively convergent problem solving of a problem comprised of at least one of:

(a) construction of representations of at least one of the user, the order, and the provider, and

(b) matching of said representations, and which contains facts and rules to be utilized by the system to construct a cascading series of requests for information by the system so that at least one of said representations and said matching improve over time.

Claim 101 (Presently amended): The system of claim 100, wherein the knowledge base is substantially separate from the user information, the order information, and the provider information, and wherein the data storage device for the knowledge base is separate from the data storage device which receives and stores the user information, the order information, and the provider information.

Claim 102 (Presently amended): The system of claim 100, wherein said representations of at least one of the user, the order, and the provider share at least one of symbolism and vocabulary the

~~requests for information result in the system obtaining at least one of the user information, the order information, the provider information, and refinements of the foregoing.~~

Claim 103 (Presently amended): ~~The system of claim 100,~~ A system wherein a user places at least one order for at least one provider and a degree of matching between each order-provider pairing is computed, the system comprising:

a data storage device to receive and store program code and user information, order information, and provider information;

at least one virtual provider that is created by matching provider information of a particular provider with order information of a particular order; and

a knowledge base which is stored in a data storage device which may be said data storage device, which is substantially separate from program code that references said knowledge base either directly or indirectly, which contains facts and rules for iteratively convergent problem solving of a problem comprised of at least one of:

(a) construction of representations of at least one of the user, the order, and the provider, and

(b) matching of said representations, and which contains facts and rules to be utilized by the system to construct a cascading series of requests for information by the system so that at least one of said representations and said matching improve over time,

wherein the knowledge base contains at least two a plurality of different categories of facts and rules including:

(a) basic facts and rules used by the system to create initial requests for information to construct said representations of at least one of the user, the order, and the provider initial questionnaires used to obtain input of initial user, order, and provider information; and

(b) additional facts and rules used by the system to at least one of:

(1) construct verification materials comprising requests for information for verification of the representations of at least the provider at least one of the user and the provider information and

(2) carry out correction processes of the representations of at least the provider in light of the verification result at least one of the user and the provider information.

Claim 104 (Presently amended): The system of claim 103, wherein the ~~additional~~ facts and rules includes facts and rules by which questions are constructed for use in one of said initial requests for information and said verification materials.

Claim 105 (Presently amended): The system of claim 104, wherein one of said initial requests for information and said ~~the~~ verification materials are constructed in a real time manner by the system ~~question by question when the system determines that at least one of verification and correction of information is appropriate~~ , and wherein answers to previous questions influence choice of subsequent questions.

Claim 106 (Presently amended): The system of claim 104, wherein the said verification materials include ~~multiple-choice~~ verification tests comprised of questions and a plurality of answers to each respective question.

Claim 107 (Presently amended): The system of claim 100, wherein the requests for information comprise at least one of questionnaires, application forms, interview scripts, third party reference check requests, and verification tests.

Claim 108 (Presently amended): The system of claim 100, wherein the said cascading requests for information are organized in a plurality of well defined steps levels so that ~~the a~~ response to one or more requests for information in one step level generates one or more requests for information in another step level.

Claim 109 (Presently cancelled): ~~The system of claim 108, wherein the requests for information are organized into at least three levels.~~

Claim 110 (Presently amended): The system of claim 100, wherein the system makes at least one request for information from at least one entity, receives at least one response from a respective entity, and determines which particular request for information was satisfied without the respective entity identifying itself ~~themselves~~.

Claim 111 (Previously amended): The system of claim 110, wherein the system includes a plurality of hidden codes to identify the respective entity who is responding.

Claim 112 (Previously presented): The system of claim 100, further comprising a knowledge base system that updates the information contained in the knowledge base automatically so that the knowledge base is an adaptive knowledge base.

Claim 113 (Previously amended): The system of claim 112, wherein the knowledge base is automatically updated to provide updates, and wherein the updates may be used as a basis for requesting additional information.

Claim 114 (Previously amended): The system of claim 100/113, further comprising a reporting system that at least one of (a) sends status messages to the user regarding the status of a particular order in the system, and (b) sends status messages to providers regarding the status of the virtual providers relating to respective providers in the system, wherein the reporting system advises at least one of users and providers when the knowledge base is automatically updated, and wherein at least one of users and providers input additional information into the system in response to the advisories.

Claim 115 (Previously amended): The system of claim 100, further comprising  
a scoring system that compares the provider information and the order information of one said virtual provider, and that determines a score for said virtual provider based upon the degree of matching between the provider information and the order information.

Claim 116 (Previously amended): The system of claim 115, wherein the score is computed from a predetermined formula which includes at least one of user-specified criteria, user-specified weighting factors, and user-specified relative importance of said user specified criteria.

Claim 117 (Previously presented): The system of claim 115, wherein the scoring system determines scores based in part on degree of clustering of keywords in information provided.

Claim 118 (Previously amended): The system of claim 117, wherein the information provided is at least one of (a) user information, (b) order information, and (c) provider information, which information includes at least one of a job description, an application, a biography, and a resume.

Claim 119 (Previously presented): The system of claim 115, wherein the scoring system considers the degree of matching through multiple steps including receiving ~~and inputting~~ additional user information and optionally requesting ~~the~~ said additional user information.

Claim 120 (Previously presented): The system of claim 115, further comprising a rescoring system that automatically corrects the scores based on correction factors.

Claim 121 (Previously amended): The system of claim 120, wherein the correction factors are derived from at least one of interviewing the provider, objective testing of the provider, and reference checking of the provider information.

Claim 122 (Previously amended): The system of claim 119, wherein the system further comprises a management system that tracks each virtual provider through the multiple steps; and a sequencing system that specifies contents of each step of the multiple steps.

Claim 123 (Previously presented): The system of claim 122, further comprising a timer that allocates a pre-determined time to complete at least one of the multiple steps.

Claim 124 (Previously presented): The system of claim 123, wherein the system sends an alarm indicating that a predetermined time period has lapsed without requisite action.

Claim 125 (Previously amended): The system of claim 124, wherein the alarm is sent to at least one individual recipient selected from the group consisting of the user, the provider, a third party, and an operator of the system, wherein the alarm is classified as either a warning alarm or an urgent alarm, and wherein the alarm is sent to the at least one individual recipient based on whether the respective at least one individual recipient has access to warning alarms or to urgent alarms.

Claim 126 (Previously amended): The system of claim 122, wherein the contents of each step of the multiple steps at least includes instructions to at least one of (a) the user regarding the input of additional information including at least one of (1) user information and (2) order information and (b) the provider regarding the input of additional provider information, and wherein the sequencing system provides default content of a step.

Claim 127 (Previously amended): The system of claim 126, wherein the default content is modified by the user.

Claim 128 (Previously amended): The system of claim 121, further comprising a device to request information which is one of (a) an avatar which is an animated image generated automatically by the system or (b) a simulated interviewer.

Claim 129 (Previously amended): The system of claim 121, further comprising a device to accept verbal input, and wherein information is provided as verbal input and the system converts the verbal input to digital form.

Claim 130 (Previously presented): The system of claim 100, further comprising a device to request information which is one of (a) an avatar which is an animated image generated automatically by the system or (b) a simulated interviewer.

Claim 131 (Previously presented): The system of claim 100, further comprising a device to accept verbal input, and wherein information is provided as verbal input and the system converts the verbal input to digital form.

Claim 132 (Previously amended): The system of claim 100, further comprising a reporting system that at least one of (a) sends status messages to the user regarding the status of a particular order in the system, and (b) sends status messages to providers regarding the status of the virtual providers relating to the respective providers in the system.

Claim 133 (Previously amended): The system of claim 100, further comprising a billing system that bills the user based on at least one of (a) number of providers that have been matched with the orders placed by said user, and (b) number of orders placed during a period of time by said user.

Claim 134 (Previously amended): The system of claim 100, wherein the user is a prospective employer and the provider is one of a prospective employee or independent contractor.

Claim 135 (Previously amended): The system of claim 100, wherein the user is a prospective patient and the provider is one of a prospective doctor or dentist.

Claim 136 (Previously amended): The system of claim 100, wherein the user is a human shopper and the provider is a supplier of one of companionship, goods, or services.

Claim 137 (Previously amended): The system of claim 100, wherein the degree of matching between each order-provider pairing is computed without elimination of any order-provider pairings.

Claim 138 (Presently cancelled): ~~The system of claim 115, further comprising a correction system that automatically corrects the scores provided by the scoring system based on correction factors.~~

Claim 139 (Presently amended): The system of claim ~~138~~ 120 wherein the correction factors are derived from at least one of interviewing the provider, objective testing of the provider, and reference checking regarding the provider information.

Claim 175 (Previously cancelled).

Claim 176 (Previously presented): The system of claim 100, wherein the knowledge base is substantially separate from said program code but may have supporting programs stored therein including at least one of components, sections, and sub-routines.

Claim 177 (Presently added): The system of claim 100, wherein said representations of at least one of the user, the order, and the provider respectively contain at least one attribute, and wherein each

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attribute of said at least one attribute is constructed independently from any other attribute of said at least one attribute using said facts and rules for iteratively convergent problem solving.

Claim 178 (Presently added): The system of claim 103, wherein said requests for information continue until an acceptable result is obtained.